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LETTER DATED 27 FEBRUARY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GREECE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a letter dated 24 February 1998 addressed to Mr. Ismael Cem, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey by Mr. Theodoros Pangalos, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Greece, containing the reply of the Greek Government to the proposals made by the Turkish Government on 12 February 1998.

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Christos ZACHARAKIS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 24 February 1998 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey

Having seen the ideas that you have conveyed to me through our Ambassador in Ankara on 12 February 1998, and having studied your proposals, I would like to offer to you the following thoughts in response.

The claims that Turkey has formulated over a number of years have been exhaustively discussed by the two countries on various occasions, and the arguments advanced are well known. There is no interest and no real purpose in an exercise to legitimize a "shopping list" of such claims. Such an exercise would indeed be counter-productive and would recreate a dead end, since the views differ widely and Greece considers the claims made by Turkey unfounded and unacceptable.

Instead, we have indicated that the only way of progress lies with the acceptance by Turkey to address its relations with Greece within the framework of international law and treaties and to test the validity of its claims by legal means available in international law. The Hellenic Republic has accepted, in very broad and comprehensive terms, the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. We believe that if Turkey accepted the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, this would facilitate the improvement in Greek-Turkish relations and, thus, the settlement of pivotal issues of common interest.

Moreover, we have made specific and realistic proposals for a step-by-step approach that would allow outstanding issues to be dealt in sequence, creating a strengthening sense of confidence in our relations and a perspective of further steps along the way.

The Government of the Hellenic Republic has, on many occasions, both bilaterally and in public statements, spelled out the advantages of channelling relations between the two countries through mechanisms available in international law, and in particular through the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

In this context, it has repeatedly been suggested to the Turkish Government that the only outstanding issue between the two countries, namely, the delimitation of the continental shelf, should be jointly referred to the International Court of Justice for resolution. Resolving this question through such referral would be a turning point in Greek-Turkish relations with wide benefits. I would like to use this opportunity to renew the standing invitation to take the steps necessary for joint referral of this question to The Hague.

In your note verbale you referred to the formalization of the Madrid joint statement. It is not clear to the Government of the Hellenic Republic what kind of formalization the Government of Turkey has in mind. The Madrid joint statement was intended as a political engagement by the two parties to respect

the principles of international law, to acknowledge the existing framework of treaties, to reject the use of force or threat of force and to respect each other's sovereignty. It was not, and could not be, intended as a constraint of rights afforded in international law, nor as a constraint of sovereignty. Legitimate interests, vital or not, should be accounted for solely within the context of international law. Further progress could be achieved through concrete measures or by abstaining from declarations or actions of a certain type.

The Government of the Hellenic Republic is participating in the most constructive way to the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in creating a framework of confidence-building measures. The objective is to reduce tension by curbing provocative behaviour and introducing a measure of mutual confidence through restraint, respect of sovereignty and existing international responsibilities.

The Hellenic Republic has also consistently supported the initiative of the Presidency of the European Union to form a group of academic and independent experts entrusted with providing the two Governments with useful recommendations on procedural options for a legal settlement of specific issues, such as the delimitation of the continental shelf. Unfortunately, Turkey decided, unilaterally, to dissociate itself from the European Union, thus leading this process to a stalemate.

We have always underlined the need for personal contacts between the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and I would greatly appreciate it if we could use the opportunity to see each other and discuss next May in Rhodes within the context of Western European Union Ministerial Meeting.

I sincerely hope that the approach I have outlined here and in previous meetings will be accepted by Turkey and that the proposals for concrete steps along this line made by the Government of the Hellenic Republic will meet with a favourable response from your side, so that Greek-Turkish relations can improve on a constructive and realistic basis.